

Matthew 10E

- We're studying the Kingdom Program as Jesus taught it to His apostles in Matthew 10
 - Jesus is on the cusp of being rejected by the nation of Israel
 - So in anticipation of that rejection, Jesus has begun preparing His apostles to take the message of the Kingdom to the world
 - I call this the Kingdom Program and it's the mission of the Church
 - Remember, the concept of the Kingdom in the Bible develops through four stages
 - The Kingdom began as a Promise God made to Abraham and his descendants
 - Then when Jesus came, the Kingdom became a Proposal, and the Lord declared the Kingdom was at hand to Israel
 - But Jesus was rejected by Israel, so the Kingdom transitioned into a Program of the Church recruiting Kingdom citizens
 - Finally, in a day to come the Kingdom will become a Place on the earth at Jesus' Second Coming
 - Promise → Proposal → Program → Place
 - So in Chapter 10 of Matthew Jesus initiates the formal preparation of His disciples to oversee the beginning of the Kingdom program
 - But the Kingdom program will operate contrary to human thinking...God's ways are not man's ways
 - The program of recruiting citizens for the Kingdom won't be a marketing campaign or a sales effort
 - We don't collect followers for Jesus through clever arguments or by force
 - People won't be awarded Kingdom citizenship by birthright, nor can they earn them by good behavior

- The recruiting method Jesus gave His disciples worked according to different rules, and relied on supernatural power
- My outline for our study of Matthew 10 is in your bulletin, and today we move into Part 4; the Result
 - Last week we looked at the Method, and in a sense you can say that this entire chapter is a method of sorts
 - But specifically, in vs.8-11 Jesus gave us four steps that should guide our approach to recruiting, to evangelism
 - First, He told us to use our spiritual gift to minister to those we seek to reach
 - Our spiritual gift is a superpower that has potential to yield supernatural results as the Lord appoints
 - The Lord will work through our gift to open doors and open hearts to make opportunities for Gospel conversations
 - Secondly, Jesus commanded us to give this message freely, because we don't want to erect unnecessary barriers to the Gospel
 - The Lord gave us His Kingdom freely
 - So what God gave us freely, we share freely with no demands or expectations on those we serve
 - Jesus, and His word and His Kingdom are not ours to sell
 - So any suggestion that people owe us something in return for the Gospel will inhibit them from responding
 - Thirdly, we go about in a posture of dependence and vulnerability, which will lead to opportunities to engage with others
 - As we lean on others to meet our needs, we'll have opportunity to present the Kingdom message
 - And when we receive a gift of kindness, reciprocation kicks in, leading the other person to anticipate something in return
 - And we take advantage of that opening to offer them the Gospel
 - Finally, step four was do our homework before entering a situation

- I want to pick back up with that thought as move forward into the Results this evening

[Matt. 10:11](#) “And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

[Matt. 10:12](#) “As you enter the house, give it your greeting.

[Matt. 10:13](#) “If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

[Matt. 10:14](#) “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

[Matt. 10:15](#) “Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

- Once again, in v.11 Lord gave His apostles step four in the method, which is do their homework
 - Jesus said “inquire who is worthy” meaning understand where opportunity is greatest
 - Combine a reliance on others’ kindness with careful forethought on how to make the most of every encounter
 - Ask questions of local expert, connect with other ministries on the ground, partner with existing mission organizations
 - Watch YouTube videos, check out social media, etc.
 - The point is, take advantage of every resource the Lord places in your path to understand your opportunities
 - But as you do, here’s the thing to remember...the point of this research is to detect where the Spirit is already at work
 - The best evangelists become experts at following the Spirit, because they know He does the real work
 - So all their research of who is worthy is directed at learning where the Spirit is already at work opening doors
 - They’re not trying to decide whose door to knock down
- When you understand this concept, it completely changes your approach to the Kingdom Program, both in how you prepare *and* how you measure results

- It's the difference between searching for buried treasure using a shovel vs. a metal detector
 - Our human way of thinking of evangelism can sometimes feel like searching for underground treasure with a shovel
 - We depend upon on our strength and persistence thinking if we dig long enough and in enough places, we'll find some gold
- In reality, that method just wastes a lot of lost time and effort and accomplishes little more than spreading a bunch of dirt around
 - Eventually, we'll get tired and frustrated of trying
 - And all we learn is a bunch of places where the treasure isn't
- But the method Jesus gave us is so much easier, because His burden is light
 - He asks us to work with a metal detector before we pull out the shovel
 - We don't waste effort digging in fruitless places...we only invest time in places worth digging
- So we do our homework expecting the Spirit to lead us in our search
 - The Spirit already knows where the sheep are, so we don't need to work in random fashion
 - We inquire (of the Spirit) who is worthy, and when He shows us, we focus our efforts there
 - It's like following the signals of a metal detector, letting the Spirit lead us to buried treasure
- Now you see how Jesus' Kingdom Program *method* operates differently from human approaches, and likewise, Jesus says consider your results differently
 - The first step of assessing results comes in v.12, where Jesus says as you enter a house, begin by giving it your greeting
 - What's our greeting?
 - By the context, our greeting is the message Jesus defined earlier in v.7, the message of the Kingdom Program

- So Jesus is saying as you begin your encounter, give your Kingdom Program greeting right away
- As we learned back in part 2, the specific words we use in our presentation will vary to fit our culture and circumstances
 - To Jews of first-century Palestine, Jesus declared the Kingdom of God was at hand, but we will state it differently
 - Regardless of the words we use, the content of our message will remain the same: it's always Christ and Him crucified
 - We preach that entry into the Kingdom has been made possible by the sacrificial death of the King
- Presenting that greeting is your first step in assessing our results
 - Does that statement sound odd to you? Does that seem too soon for us to begin evaluating results?
 - Well, here's another chance for us to rethink our approach to the Kingdom Program
 - Jesus is telling us to begin assessing our results early in the process, not at the end
- Perhaps when you've delivered the Gospel message in the past, you were focused on getting to the end of your presentation?
 - You launched in, full speed ahead, and plowed along hoping to get to the end uninterrupted and unchallenged?
 - If that's how you worked, you weren't following the Kingdom Program method
- That's racing out ahead of the Spirit, that's trying to work the process in your own power
 - What Jesus is saying is, don't get ahead of the Spirit
 - Think one step at a time, don't outrun your headlights
 - Instead, send up a trial balloon to see whether the Spirit is at work in that moment
- Think back to my metal detector analogy

- Hovering over a spot of earth with a metal detector does not produce gold
 - It's merely a way of testing whether that spot is likely to yield the gold should you make the effort to dig
 - We wave it back and forth for a moment to get a reading
 - If we don't get a response, we just move along
 - But if we get a positive reading, we look closer, and if we get consistent positive responses, we begin digging
- So you have to pay careful attention to the signals coming from your spiritual metal detector to know whether digging is warranted
 - Give someone your spiritual greeting but before you go too far, pause to take a reading
 - See whether that person is willing to go deeper
- Dumping your entire presentation on someone before understanding whether their heart is ready is like working with only a shovel
 - It's blindly digging holes hoping to find a sheep buried at the bottom
 - More importantly, it's working without the Spirit's leading
 - When the Spirit points us in a certain direction, we can't turn to Him and say, "Thanks, I got it from here..."
 - We need to rely on Him every step of the way
- Now practically speaking, these spiritual metal detector moments play out in endless ways but always with fascinating results
 - Ask simple questions like, "Has God been doing anything in your life lately? Have you been reading the Bible? Do you have questions about Jesus?"
 - One friend strikes up conversations with taxis/Uber drivers by asking if he enjoys conversations about spiritual things?
 - Or when someone indicates they're going through difficulties ask if they want prayer or maybe a word of advice from Scripture

- Personal examples...telling a waitress we pray to thank Jesus before the meal, and asking if we could pray for her in some way
- On the other hand, there are wrong ways to approach the greeting moment which can lead us to misleading results
 - You get false positives, like a metal detector going off when nothing is truly there
 - For example, asking if someone is interested in Christianity or if they want to be a Christian may get you a false positive
 - Because those terms comes with a lot of baggage
 - Many people think they are Christian simply because they grew up in "Christian" homes
 - Or because they went to church or were born in the Southern US
 - Likewise, we can't measure a person's interest in Jesus by asking if they want to go to church or read a book or listen to a podcast
 - The Kingdom Program isn't about leading people to church or a book or website
 - Because even if they say yes to those offers, we still won't know whether they have responded to Jesus Himself
 - Meanwhile, we've missed the chance to put the truth of salvation before them for their immediate consideration
 - In a sense, we're passing the buck to someone else
 - The Kingdom Program is about about leading people to a Person, to Jesus Christ
 - Of course, it's ok to invite someone to church or to suggest a good book
 - Or even send them to a website with good Bible teaching like ours...
 - But both those offers aren't substitutes for the Gospel itself
- Remember Paul's example in Athens:

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

[Acts 17:17](#) So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

[Acts 17:18](#) And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

[Acts 17:19](#) And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

[Acts 17:20](#) "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

- In v.16, Paul was doing his homework in Athens when he strikes up a conversation with some locals in the market
 - Notice the men remarked that Paul was discussing strange deities because he was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection
 - Paul was preaching the Kingdom message looking for a response
 - And it triggered the men's interest and resulted in an invitation for Paul to tell them more...that's a metal detector going off
 - So Paul followed up with a deeper presentation of Christ
- If you've read how that story ends in Acts 17, you know most of that crowd eventually loses interest in Paul's message but a few believed
 - Paul was able to find a few lost sheep by simply following the leading of the Spirit
 - But like Paul, our message won't appeal to everyone
 - Sometimes our message is met by a negative response – that's going to happen, and it's ok
- So Jesus says give a house your greeting, and then as you do, begin measuring your results
 - And if there is a positive response to your message, Jesus says in v.13 give that house or person a blessing of peace
 - In the original Greek, the text translated as "give your blessing" is just the word *erchomai*, which is the Greek verb to come or go

- So perhaps a better translation would be “if the house is worthy, peace comes”
- In other words, if the person gives a positive response to your spiritual greeting, peace has come to that person
- In Hebrew the word for peace is *shalom*, but that word also carries other subtle meanings
 - Shalom means completeness, perfection in welfare and health and safety, wholeness
 - Jesus uses the word peace to say that spiritual wholeness, spiritual health has come
 - A broken heart has been bound, a new spiritual birth has taken place, a child of God has been born again
- That’s a beautiful and succinct way to understand the moment of salvation –
 - When a person is born again through an encounter with the power of God in the message of salvation, they receive *shalom*
 - Paul puts it this way

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- In fact, Paul described Jesus’ own preaching of the Kingdom as a message of peace

Eph. 2:17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

Eph. 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

- When a person accepts the Kingdom message, our search is over...it’s just that simple
 - Then a new process begins, a process of discipleship
 - Matthew doesn’t mention that step specifically, but Luke’s account gives us that additional piece

Luke 9:4 “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.

- Luke says that the house (or person) that receives our greeting will be our focus for a time, we stay there until we move on
- We make that new sheep our primary concern until such time that we feel led by the Spirit to move on to the next place
- So imagine you're out on a street corner or going door to door in your neighborhood giving your "greeting"
 - Then someone expresses interest, your metal door goes off
 - So you dig deeper, explaining how to receive Christ as Savior
 - And the person follows suit and confesses Christ
- What happens next? Jesus says that person is now your focus
 - In effect, the Lord has just given you the privilege to be the first person to disciple that new believer
 - Now perhaps you're not equipped to work with this person very well...
 - Perhaps you meet them on an airplane and you're landing in 30 minutes
- In those cases, you work to find them a local church community, or refer them to an organization or friend or pastor you know in the area
 - At the very least, point them in the direction of good Bible teaching resources; a way for them to pursue Christ
 - In the best cases, you take them under your wing for a time and help them begin an obedient walk with Jesus
- Whatever you do, don't say goodbye and move on...because the Kingdom Program isn't about simply putting notches in our belt
 - It's about finding – and caring for – lost sheep
 - So we must take a long term perspective...a view that seeks to serve Christ in a process of preparing disciples
- For the same reason, if the results go nowhere we need to move on
 - In v.13 Jesus says if the person is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace
 - Here again I think this English translation isn't as helpful

- A more literal way to render v.13 would be “let your peace return to you”
- In Luke 10, Jesus is quoted speaking it this way:

Luke 10:6 “If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

- The idea here is that in the face of a rejection, our offer of peace continues on with us elsewhere
 - Jesus is preparing us for the reality that at times – in fact many times – our message of peace will be rejected
 - The idea that someone would refuse an offer of peace with God seems almost unimaginable to us, but the human heart is hard
- And if we worry too much about failure, we might be tempted to come up with alternative methods – to consider alternatives
 - We might begin to think that there’s something wrong with our message or a method that could be improved
 - That if we made “improvements” in what Jesus told us to do, if we innovate, we might get more yes’s and fewer no’s
- While that thinking might seem sensible and even well-intentioned, it’s both wrong and dangerous
 - Jesus didn’t ask us to innovate on His methods, to improve on the message or to make the Gospel more palatable
 - As I’ve mentioned in past weeks, we need to remain absolutely clear that our objective is finding lost sheep – not turning goats into sheep
 - Our message must always be the Gospel and not some other, more palatable and easier-to-accept worldly message
 - And our method is preaching about Jesus, not trying to soft-sell religion or to sneak up on someone with the Gospel
 - Then notice in vs.14-15 Jesus also makes clear we aren’t to dwell on the rejections so they don’t become motivation to not do these things
 - If someone will not receive us or heed our words, we shake the dust off our feet and move on

- Receiving us refers to how they respond to us as we offer someone our spiritual greeting seeking an audience
- And heeding our words refers to their response to the Gospel message itself
- Jesus says regardless of whether they reject us or the Gospel itself, our response is the same: shake the dust off
 - In that day, travel was mostly by foot with sandals or leather boots
 - And roads were either hard packed soil, brick or stone, and the ground was always dusty
 - So travelers' feet became caked in dirt
 - When travelers sought shelter in a home, it was customary for the host to offer to wash the person's feet as a form of hospitality
 - Hospitality of this sort was very important in Eastern culture, and still is today
 - So if a traveler had to shake dust off his feet as he left a town, it meant he didn't receive a good reception
 - And that was a severe indictment against the town and a sign of shame
 - In fact, Jesus says those who heard and rejected the Kingdom message faced harsher judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah
 - Jesus is speaking about the unique consequences for the generation of Israel who rejected Messiah when He came
 - We'll take a close look at that consequence when we get to Chapter 12
 - The point is that even when your message is not received, you have still produced a testimony to the glory of God
 - You came to someone bringing a message of grace and mercy and hoping to produce a testimony of their faith and salvation
 - But instead, the Lord chose to use you to produce a testimony of judgment
 - You shake the dust off your feet in the sense that you acknowledge their rejection is on their own head, not yours

- And that's a part of the Kingdom Program...God may use us as a witness so someone may come to know the truth
 - Or He may use us as a witness against someone
 - Either way, it's in God's hands...we're simply called to be obedient to deliver the message
 - And obvious as it is to say, the Kingdom Program will not result in the salvation of everyone who hears our message
 - Use that truth to produce even greater urgency to reach the next town
 - Don't continue digging after the Spirit says you won't find gold
- That's why Jesus says when someone rejects the message, our peace returns to us
 - He's reminding us that the Spirit wasn't working in that moment through our message to bring faith to that heart
 - And if the Spirit isn't working, we can't work without Him
 - So it's as if our message of peace went out and bounced off their hard heart, and in that sense it returns to you
 - Which means you still have that message available to share with others
 - One person's rejection doesn't mean the message was wrong or that our method was wrong
 - It means we need to keep looking...we haven't found our lost sheep yet
 - Do you remember in Luke 14 the parable about the king who holds a banquet and invites guests to attend?
 - The invitation goes out, but the invited guests refuse to accept the offer
 - The king doesn't say, "Well I guess my invitation was worded wrong. I need to change my approach, make the menu more appealing,...etc."
 - No, the king in that parable tells his servants to look elsewhere, talk to more people

- Because the king knew his offer was good and the opportunity would appeal to someone sooner or later
 - And sure enough, the servants filled that banquet table with people all around
 - Of course, in that parable, Jesus is the King, and we are both the invited guests who received the offer...
 - And we are His servants seeking to fill the seat next to us
- Now it's time for another challenge...
 - In weeks past, I've asked you to go out from this building with a willingness to put to work what you've learned
 - In Week 1, it was to look at the world with spiritual eyes knowing that lost sheep are all around us
 - After that, I asked you to prepare your message and to apply the method Jesus taught us
 - And in those weeks, I've been hearing great testimonies
 - We had a group of ladies organize to go out on Super Bowl Sunday
 - They went to the Riverwalk with Gospel tracts and engaged in conversations about Jesus
 - Last week I read you the letter from the lady who listens online who heard my challenge to reach out in the way Jesus taught
 - So she prayed for an opportunity to help someone in need
 - And the Lord put a person in her path literally minutes later
 - So then she was faithful to preach the Gospel to that person, something she hadn't done before
 - This week the ministry received another letter from a listener in Indiana who also decided he wanted to be more receptive to the Spirit's leading
 - He told a story of helping a woman who was walking at night on the side of the road through a snow storm
 - He took her to her destination and along the way he offered her a spiritual greeting, praying for her and telling her about VBVM

- Turns out the woman was a former student of the man's wife, who taught her in junior high school years earlier
- I also heard from a man who took initiative to talk to an Amish man about Jesus and VBVM!
 - After months, he ran into the Amish man again and this what he heard

[The Amish man] came up to me and couldn't stop talking about what he was learning in the Genesis series and he really liked the way VBVM! taught. He told me he was texting and telling all his friends about the website. I told him if you like Pastor Armstrong, then his Sovereignty of God Lesson 6 message will change your life. The next night he couldn't stop talking about how he never knew God could be like that. Yep, I told him the last ten minutes of that teaching **CHANGED MY LIFE**. So it seems God's word and Verse by Verse Ministry are going into the Amish community. God is sovereign.

- Indeed, God is sovereign...and all those people had to do to experience those miracles was set their minds to following the Spirit
 - That's all that stands between you and a miracle in your week ahead
 - Who will you give your greeting? Where is the Spirit leading you? What could happen?
 - I can't wait to hear next week